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THE PIANO-PLAYER REVIEW.

A MONTHLY
MUSICAL JOURNAL FOR
USERS OF PIANO-PLAYERS AND
ALL MUSIC LOVERS.

EDITED BY

ERNEST NEWMAN.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

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HOW PERFORATED MUSIC-ROLLS ARE MADE.

BY the courtesy of one of the largest manufacturers of music-rolls, I was permitted, a short time ago, to go through the factory and examine the machines and the latest method by which music is transcribed from the printed score to the perforated paper-roll.

The method is simple, but the machines seemed to me complicated and very delicate ; but that may be because I am not an engineer. As I am not able really to describe accurately the parts of the machines used in producing music-rolls, I must, perforce, be content with merely writing out the underlying idea, the principle in use, in a manner simple enough to enable the average reader to get a straightforward mental view of the work.

The music selected for "cutting" (cutting is the technical term used) is generally those pieces which are most in demand as gauged by the enquiries for them; and entirely new pieces, fresh from the publishers, are often "cut" at once if they are likely to be popular. The manufacturers who permitted me to collect information for this article have a selection committee formed from members of their staff, and this committee sits once a month and decides what new rolls shall be put in hand. A list of enquiries from retailers is carefully kept up-to-date, so that it is easy to see what to choose for best meeting the need of the general public.

The first stage in the conversion of print to perforations is taken in hand by one of the musicians on the staff, and the "scale of cutting" is decided.

By scale of cutting is meant just how much space on the roll should be allotted to any one note ; the standard varies somewhat with the speed at which the music to be cut has to be played. For example, in a very slow movement, perhaps an inch perforation to a crotchet, two inches

to a minim, might be used, whereas in very rapidly played music only half that space would be necessary. The spacing is marked on the score, cuts or repeats are shown up by blue pencil, and the general planning of the scheme of cutting is made clear on the score. The score is then passed on to another musician, who begins to do the actual transcribing. Necessity, that fecund mother, has brought forth a very simple and clever chart scheme for this purpose, and as it would be difficult to explain it very clearly, a section of the chart is reproduced on page 190.

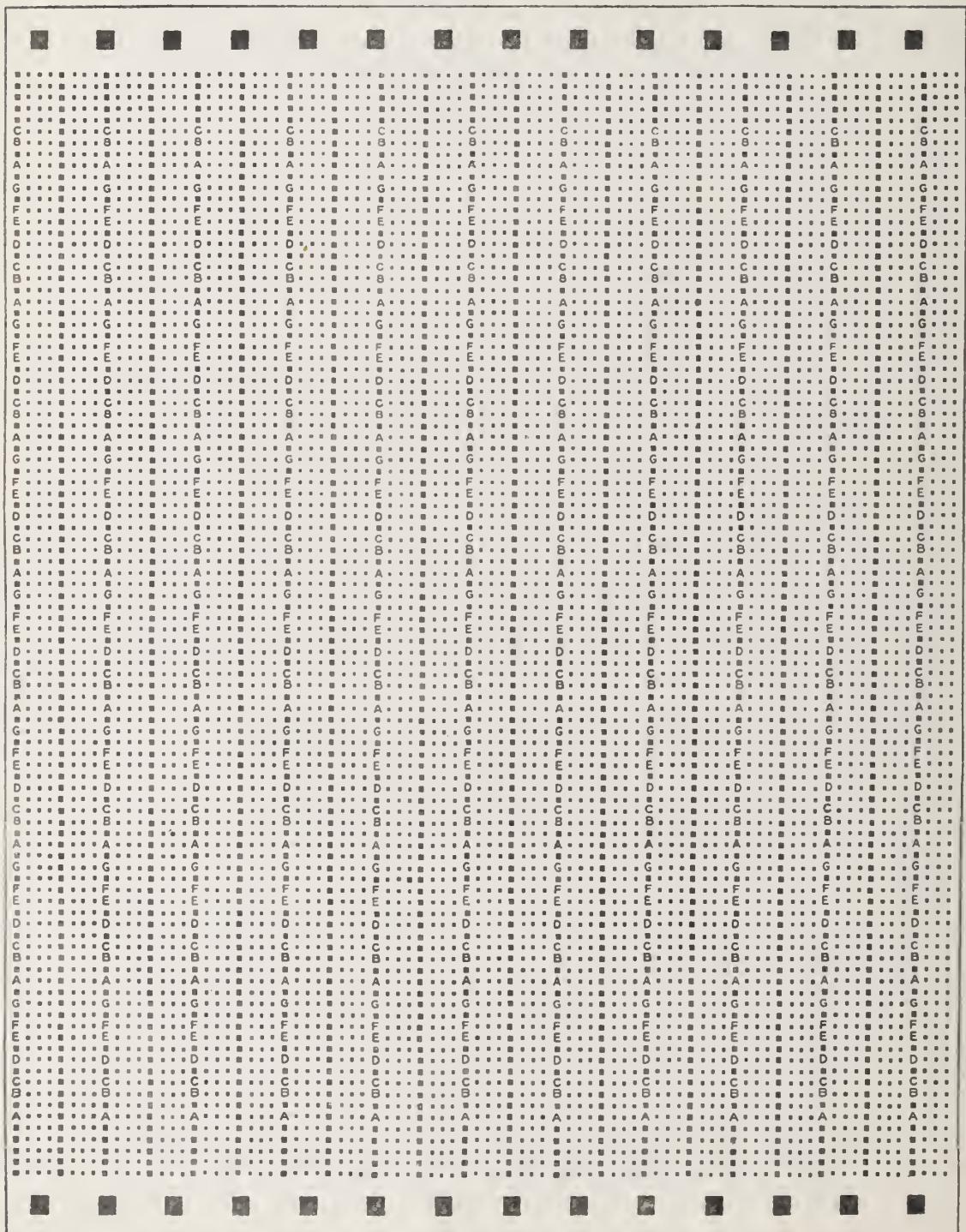
You will note that the chart covers the full compass of the piano ; the notes are marked, and the small black dots in between denote the space allotted to each note. Later on it will be seen how the small black dots are a guide in the actual machine-cutting.

Suppose, for instance, the best-known phrase in English tunes had to be cut. The transcriber sits, with the score in front of him, and the chart, in the form of a long pasteboard roll, laid over a small table between the score and the transcriber, pencil in hand ; he sees the phrase thus :—



and with scaling at 4 dots to a crotchet, he marks over with his pencil the 4 dots, left to right, of the G B D G on the chart of the first chord, and the next two in similar manner. The fourth chord, D A D F \sharp , is a dotted crotchet, which gives half as much again time value to the notes as the previous ones. The transcriber therefore rules off 6 dots to each of the notes on this chord instead of 4. The following chord, E A C \sharp G, is of quaver time value—half that of a crotchet—and only 2 points to each note are ruled through. The

last chord is of the same length as the first three, and 4 points are ruled off to each note.



The section of the chart now looks as on opposite page (191).

SECTION OF CHART SHOWING TRANSCRIBER'S
MARKINGS READY FOR HAND-PUNCHING.

God

save

our

grac-

-ious

King.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | C | C | C | C | C |
| B | B | B | B | B | B |
| A | A | A | A | A | A |
| G | G | G | G | G | G |
| F | F | F | F | F | F |
| E | E | E | E | E | E |
| D | D | D | D | D | D |
| C | C | C | C | C | C |
| B | B | B | B | B | B |
| A | A | A | A | A | A |
| G | G | G | G | G | G |
| F | F | F | F | F | F |
| E | E | E | E | E | E |
| D | D | D | D | D | D |
| C | C | C | C | C | C |
| B | B | B | B | B | B |
| A | A | A | A | A | A |
| G | G | G | G | G | G |
| F | F | F | F | F | F |
| E | E | E | E | E | E |
| D | D | D | D | D | D |

This, then, is the process of transcribing :—ruling out with pencil enough dot spaces to correspond with the time value of each note in the score. Using the scaling above, 16 dots are ruled out for a semibreve \circ , 8 for a minim F , 4 for a crotchet P , 2 for a quaver J , 1 for a semiquaver J , and so on. The transcriber finishes the whole of the score and chart in this manner.

The chart is now passed on to the hand-punching department. The workers here are furnished with a hard wooden punching block and various-sized steel punches. The chart is placed over the punching block, and wherever the transcriber's pencil has scored out the black dots, a hole is punched.

From this stage, correction and revision is done in the rough, the chart passing from the punchers to the transcriber until it is considered sufficiently correct to put on the cutting machines.

On the edge of the chart are seen square holes at equal distances apart (\square). These square holes fit over a gear wheel, each cog as it revolves taking up one of the square holes, thus causing the chart to travel in the cutting machine.

The chart travels in a downward and perpendicular position close to the edge of a horizontal metal table, and then under and away.

On the horizontal metal table is fixed a series of 88 metal points (one for each note), rather like the points of a large hair comb ; each point, however, is in rapid movement from its position forward and on to the chart ($\frac{1}{4}$ -inch movement). Watching the machine at work, one arrives at the word "feelers" ; these comb points, when in motion, keep tapping the chart ; every dot on the chart is tapped by a point which seems to be feeling for a space deeper than the chart surface.

Underneath the table on which these wonderful little feelers are at work, and corresponding with the 88 feelers,

are 88 steel punches moving just as rapidly as—perhaps more so than—the feelers ; each punch is controlled by a feeler, and when one of the feelers finds a perforation on the chart, then the punch below is released and allowed to punch holes on the ordinary paper-roll, which travels simultaneously under the machine punches as the chart passes the feelers.

Compared with a type-writer the chart is the shorthand notes, the feelers the keys of the type machine, and the punches correspond to the actual type as it hits the paper.

After the first ordinary paper-roll is punched in this way, the first sample is taken off the machine for serious revision. Hitherto the corrections and revisions have been chiefly to prevent wrong notes and merely mechanical defects. The roll may be, and often is, mechanically correct and corresponding exactly with the printed score ; but it is simply astounding to hear the inartistic result from a roll that only mathematically agrees with the score.

Rolls put on the market when left at this stage have been sold to the public in large quantities in the past, and to-day a cheap roll is often one that has received none of the expensive work of musicians which forms the next stage in the manufacture of the roll that can be used to produce artistically played music.

The differences, the omissions in time values, the extensions of time values, the overlapping of notes, that actually occur when a piece of music is well played by hand, are very subtle, and many of these subtle alterations must be allowed for in the cutting of rolls for piano-players.

For instance, any melody played very smoothly and sweetly is largely the result of playing a note while the previous one is held down ; a kind of overlapping takes place, and some perforations will commence 2 or 3 points even before the mathematically proper time, or one note may be made longer to cover the entrance of the next, and so on.

No one who has not compared the first exact roll with one that has passed the final test can have any idea of the amount of care, knowledge, and labour involved in the preparation of a first-class roll. Considering that the most classical, the most modern and difficult music is satisfactorily transcribed, one is left wondering at the cost entailed in the production of a work like, say, one of Sir Edward Elgar's symphonies ; and for real music-lovers, at least, it is best for them to purchase rolls that are turned out under the supervision of highly-paid musicians, even if the price is considerably higher.

I was particularly impressed with this part of the process, and watched how the cantabile melodies were checked again and again, the note spacing and overlapping altered until perfect smoothness was obtained.

For this purpose the roll is, of course, put on to the piano-player, and the musician relies on his ear for the effect that he wants to make possible.

After several revisions the roll is sent to the musician-in-chief, and passed for stock cutting.

From this finished roll another master roll is cut on a fresh chart. The completed chart is put into the machine, and the rolls are cut in quantities—about a dozen at a time.

The expression marks on the face of the roll, the line guides for tempo, the coloured lines for loud and soft, are placed on the first finished roll by hand, and then the remainder of the new rolls are marked by a clever kind of machine pen.

This machine is roughly in the following form :—

There are ten or a dozen glass shelves in a case. The case is open at both ends, and a dozen rolls travel flat over the shelves, one roll to a shelf, all travelling at the same pace and in perfect alignment one with the other. A dozen pen points or inked wheels, one for each glass shelf, lie on the

paper as it travels over the shelf, and at the top shelf stands the operator holding a lever with pointer attached. This lever operates all the dozen pens at once, and is guided by the operator as he holds his pointer to the top roll (hand marked), and traces the pointer along the line of the master roll. In this way a dozen rolls are marked at once, instead of each having to be separately traced by hand, as was the case not very long ago.

It is significant that this pen machine and several others have been invented by members of the staff of the factory through which I was allowed to go.

The roll itself being now finished, the process of putting on to the holders is a simple one, and the practised eye and hand make light labour of accurately placing the paper on the holder in such a manner that there is no chance of irregular running of the roll.

The foregoing is an outline of the usual method of making perforated music-rolls, but there is yet another, a simpler and more direct method, but on the whole not nearly so satisfactory.

A machine is in use by means of which a pianist at the keyboard actually types marks direct on to a chart as he plays. The marks are then punched and rolls made. It is also possible to have a roll cut direct from the pianist's fingers, but to have one marked is safer, and marks are more easily revised than are perforations.

In the factory I heard an interesting anecdote which explains the effectiveness of this machine, and the keen business methods of a well-known firm in New York.

A great singer was about to sing at a piano-player recital, and the heads of the business house asked the lady to see the music-roll making department. After a time, in which the singer's interest was notably growing, she was courteously invited to play and sing one of her own songs.

When the song was ended the request came: "Would you be good enough to sing this to-night at the recital?" "But it isn't even in manuscript," said the lady; "I haven't had time to write it down! No one could accompany me, and I can't do both satisfactorily."

"Oh, but we can play the accompaniment for you on the player, Madame, quite well." "How can you when I have never written it out?"

"No, Madame, you have never written it out, maybe, but just now, when you played your song, you also cut it into a roll at the same time. Here is the roll ready for rehearsal: will you try it?"

The rehearsal was satisfactory, and the song was sung in public to the accompaniment of the player that night.

The weakness of this method of producing music-rolls lies in the fact that the pianist's own tempo and phrasing are all incorporated in the roll when finished, and therefore no room is left for the individuality of interpretation.

Using a roll of this kind, the player-pianist simply pedals away, and, beyond varying the degrees of loud and soft, is merely a machine, and it is nearly always an uninteresting job for the performer at least.

Returning from my visit to the factory, and mentally making notes for this article, I found myself wondering which of the two inventions—the piano-player or the flying machine—was the greater. There being few points in common in the two inventions I gave it up as futile speculation, but for all that I was nearly as greatly impressed by what I had seen as when I first saw a monoplane soar up above my head.

H. E.

In conjunction with the Melodant is employed a system of valves which are capable of extremely fine gradation. They are connected to a lever on the left, which is variable. One position gives the normal Melodant effect, according to the pressure put on the pedals. Another position throws the Melodant out of operation, and the control is then effected by means of the accent lever and the bass and treble buttons; but the third position—variable in an arc—enables the user to graduate the degree of the accompaniment notes from the faintest *pp* up to the same degree of power as is being used for the melody notes themselves, and in the same way, by the degree of pressure on the pedals, the degree of force used for the melody notes can be graduated with this. Therefore complete control of touch is obtained.

The Phrasing Lever is a small balanced lever, generally operated by the first and second fingers of the right hand. This is connected directly with the motor governor, and a slight pressure on either end will retard or stop or accelerate the speed of the roll. It is extremely sensitive, and responds in the most effective manner to every demand made on it. One important feature in connection with the Phrasing Lever is that the normal or basic time of the composition remains unaltered. As soon as the pressure on the Phrasing Lever is released the normal time is resumed.

The Duplex Spool Frame is another feature in connection with the music-roll. With this Duplex Spool Frame the owner of an Angelus instrument is able to use all standard gauge 65 or 88-note rolls, no matter what direction of travel is employed in winding them, as with this patented device the receiving roller is detachable from its ordinary socket, and can be placed either above or below the tracker bar, and, as explained, all standard gauge rolls can be used with it. This will, of course, appeal to those people who have facilities for obtaining different kinds of music.

The Artistyle Music-Rolls are a patent of the Company. On most rolls there are two guides for expression: that is to say, one for the touch and the other for the time. There is a certain difficulty in following two distinct guides at one time; at any rate, as the Angelus people saw, a combination into one line is much easier to follow. The Artistyle roll does this.

The common method of indicating volume changes is by means of a dotted line, which when placed at the left of the roll indicates *pp*, to the right *ff*, and the variations in between. On the Artistyle instead of dots a series of letters and signs "A," "R," "T," and modifications of them are used.

The position of the line itself on the roll denotes what volume should be employed, just in the same way as the dotted line does, but the letters of which the Artistyle line is formed indicate the tempo changes and control. For example: a series of "T's" denotes that the ordinary tempo, as set at the commencement of the roll by the metronome lever, should rule, and a series of "A's" denotes acceleration, and a series of "R's" a retard. The degree of the acceleration or of the retard is left entirely to the individuality of the player, there being no arbitrary markings which must be followed in a hard and fast way. It is claimed that this method makes for a far greater artistic result than is possible by any other means. As stated, pauses and holds are shown on the roll as well as accentuation marks. The tempo changes are obtained entirely by means of the Phrasing Lever described above.

The story of a test through which an Angelus Player passed is worth giving. The music critic of a Pittsburg newspaper denied that piano-playing devices could be artistic, whereupon he was promptly challenged on behalf of the Angelus. The terms of the challenge were that a

hand-pianist and a player-pianist were to be concealed ; that they were to play the same pieces ; and that the critic was to distinguish between the two. Among the judges were Mr. Edwin H. Lemare, the well-known organist, and Mr. Adolph Foerster, an American composer. Before the first sixteen bars had been played the challenged critic declared that the music was being improvised, and therefore it was clearly not the machine which was being used. As a matter of fact the supposed improvisation had proceeded solely from the Angelus. In most cases critics of the piano-player can be confounded in this way. Put them behind a screen, and ask them whether you are playing by hand or using the machine. If you know your business as a player-pianist, the man behind the screen will only be right by luck.

Another interesting point of which the Angelus makers inform us is that Mr. Caruso uses a player to accompany him in his practice.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF AUTO-MUSIC.

BETWEEN the arts of painting and music, besides the main distinction that the results are in the one case visible and imitative, and in the other case audible and original, there is a further essential distinction which, as such, perhaps many people have never consciously observed: in painting, when the artist has completed his work by embodying his conception in permanent material form—the picture—that picture is itself the direct object of the public's appreciation; whereas the completed work of the creative musician has still to be interpreted by the executive musician.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this separation of the executive from the creative function in music is its bearing on the disputed artistic claims of automatic and quasi-automatic musical instruments, of which the player-piano is the chief example.

One who simply enjoys the effects of music, without taking the slightest interest in any of its problems or theories, having the qualities of his defects, can listen to these instruments with a perfectly open mind, and hear the results just as they really are. But that is exceptional. There are very few people with so little interest in the controversies of their favourite art as to be incapable of harbouring any sort of prejudice. So it is not surprising to find that, quite independent, or rather, indeed, in spite of, the actual experience of hearing the player-piano, there exists a widely-held *à priori* belief concerning it, a belief which may be expressed thus: "If inanimate mechanism be substituted for the living executant, the musical result must be devoid of all expression."

The way in which this prejudice is dealt with from the business point of view by the manufacturers of the

instruments is, naturally, somewhat different from the way in which criticism, caring for nothing but the true theory, must deal with it. The makers are quite justified in their claim that the player-piano is expressive ; but the necessity of following the line of least resistance to public prejudice leads them to base the claim on the acceptance, instead of the confutation, of the false notion at the root of the prejudice, the notion, namely, that in ordinary piano-playing by hand, all the expressiveness of the music is imparted to it by the feeling of the player. The truth is, on the contrary, that, except for the individual touch given to his interpretation by means of subtle modifications of the expression which is indicated in the score, the greatest pianist is no more than the mechanical agency by which the composer's creation is materialised in physical sound. The score already enshrines a finished work of art, not an expressionless sequence of notes and chords ; and, in order to reveal it, nothing remains but what is in itself a mechanical operation—the embodiment of its various signs and symbols, of expression as well as of notation, in the material sounds for which they stand. True, we often hear piano-playing described as " very correct, but without expression." When people say this, however, they do not mean what their words mean. One half of the sentence flatly contradicts the other. To play correctly, one must play with the correct expression. When a pianist plays correctly in the proper sense of the word, his rendering is highly expressive as well as note-perfect, and would still be so even though it were quite mechanical so far as his own feelings were concerned. No doubt this rarely or never happens actually : in the case of the living player the correct interpretation of the score is inseparable from the expression of his own feeling. But the cause of the expressiveness, as an effect transmitted to the audience, is the accurate interpretation of the score, not the accompanying feeling of the player.

Analysis thus shows that, if it were somehow possible to get the piano-score correctly materialised in physical sound by some means other than that living mechanism which alone is connected organically with human feeling, nothing would be lost except the subtleties of individual expression which are only the difference between the playing of one expert artist and another ; and the result would be an interpretation retaining the main excellence common to the playing of all expert artists, namely, an accurate, and therefore expressive, fulfilment of the composer's intentions. The player-piano, heard without prejudice, furnishes an experimental proof of the soundness of this analysis.

But the public have always believed, and still believe, that, in the playing of the ordinary piano, it is precisely in those refinements of individual feeling that all the expressiveness lies. The fact that the phrase quoted above, " very correct, but without expression," is the most commonplace utterance of adverse criticism shows how little consciousness exists of the truth that nine-tenths, so to speak, of the expressiveness even of the most strongly-individualised interpretation consists in the more or less correct rendering of an emotional content which already lies latent but fully symbolised in the score. And so the trade, following, as I have said, the line of least resistance to public prejudice, assure us that the auto-piano offers the same scope for individual expression as the ordinary piano, which is like claiming for the typewriter the same capacity for revealing varieties of individual style as that of handwriting. They bow to the fallacy concerning expressiveness in general, as an immovable prejudice, and seek to neutralise it by a counter-acting fallacy concerning the player-piano in particular, a pragmatic stratagem which at least tends to get the essential fact accepted, the fact that the player-piano *is* expressive. This, by-the-way, is curiously similar to the method by which another musical prejudice is said to be

circumvented, the English prejudice in favour of foreign instrumentalists ; for here also one illusion—the influence of an English name which to some ears makes a first-class performance seem not first-class—is nullified by another, the illusion that John Smith is not John Smith but Vladimir Zametoff ; and here also, again, we get the essential fact accepted—in this case the fact that the performance *is* first-class.

Still, is it not better to accept the essential fact without either of the illusions ? The player-piano *is* expressive ; but it is so, not because of any capacity, like that of the piano directly played, for enabling the executant to express his own musical temperament in terms of the composer's score, but simply because it enables him, by mere intelligence and passive taste, to produce a faithful materialisation of the work itself.

RUSSELL THOMPSON.

PIANOFORTE TOUCH.

[The following was originally drafted as a reply to one or two correspondents in "Nature," who raised points in connection with Prof. Bryan's article on "Pianoforte Touch," in the issue of that journal for 8th May. Prof. Bryan is kind enough to allow us to make use of it here.—ED. P.P.R.]

1.—Although some time must necessarily elapse before the formulæ are sufficiently developed for publication, the following considerations may throw sufficient light on this somewhat difficult problem.

(a) By starting on similar lines to Kaufmann's, I find that the duration of contact of a pianoforte hammer *treated as a perfectly inelastic particle* is determined by the vanishing of a certain function which has several maxima and minima before it actually vanishes, some of the minimum values being very small. It is clear that any small departure from the assumed conditions (which are obviously not fulfilled in actual practice) might easily convert one of these minima into a vanishing or negative value—or, on the other hand, might make the first negative minima positive. This condition alone is highly favourable to the production of variations of tone-quality.

(b) If we take account of the inertia and elasticity of the stem of the hammer, the latter immediately becomes a system capable of vibration, and the method of normal co-ordinates enables us to replace it by a simple equivalent system: for example, two or more particles moving in a straight line, connected by elastic springs. Even if we only take two particles, it is clear that the duration of impact will depend largely on the initial compression or extension of the spring and the relative velocity of the particles at the commencement of the impact.

(c) The construction of the check action does not preclude the possibility of a multiple impact.

. In view of these considerations need we write down the differential equations ?

II.—I consider that touch control in connection with variations in tone quality is such an important factor in piano playing, and the commercial piano-playing machines are so defective in this respect, that I have been at considerable trouble in getting the methods and devices protected by a patent. It will be a great convenience if readers who are interested will arrange for experiments with this " patent," unless they can come to Bangor and see it working. The experiments at the Physical Society were very rough, as they had to be made with a hired machine that must not be damaged ; further independent tests are therefore desirable.

I have heard a finger-pianist perform a very delicate pianissimo passage in which the melody notes rang out clearly above the accompaniment without being played any louder. It was simply a difference of tone-quality. An approximate reproduction with my player would be not very difficult, as it is a kind of effect I am constantly using, but I have heard a similar passage hopelessly spoilt by an expert at an exhibition recital of a commercial machine.

Like Dr. Heaviside, I started with a great belief in the possibilities of the mechanical player, and up till a year or so I considered that the prejudice against this machine was unfounded ; but these recent experiments have convinced me that this prejudice will continue to exist until the principles of dynamics and physics have received due recognition in the construction of the players. I entirely agree with Mr. Wheatley's remarks about the lack of responsiveness of the average commercial player. It has a certain mechanical individuality of its own which it persists in asserting in opposition to the efforts of the person controlling it. In my instrument this objectionable feature is at least reduced to a small quantity of the second order, and I wish Mr. Wheatley could see and try it. The mistake

is that the makers have treated the pressure as constant instead of as a very variable function of the time. If it is the right function of the time for playing one passage, it will be the wrong function for another. Does not this explain Mr. Wheatley's experiences ? The remedy the makers revel in is to damp down all the notes on one side or the other of a hard and fast dividing line, and the results are sometimes weird. As soon as dynamical considerations are introduced the possibility of differentiating between parts of chords without this dividing element becomes evident.

The dynamical method renders it possible to intensify either the treble or bass notes of a chord in any part of the keyboard, and this local intensification can be made so marked as to make people wonder how it can be done. It rarely fails unless the chord has been badly cut. It is the only method which can give permanent satisfaction to a person with a real taste for music, or which can produce effects approximating to those which Dr. F. J. Allen mentions as obtainable with fingers. If the piano-player is ever to become an educational element in schools and to supersede some of the drudgery of the school music-lesson, the use of expression devices, either working automatically or cutting the keyboard in halves, will have to be rigorously forbidden. The production of the necessary effects by dynamical action is probably less difficult than the control of the speed regulator, which must always remain a difficulty.

I quite agree with Dr. Heaviside that the mere mechanical reproduction of great compositions is an education in itself; but I consider that it is certain to become wearisome unless it is accompanied by an effort at individual interpretation. The mere rhythm of music creates an instinct to beat time in some way or other, and my "patent" is so designed as to utilise this instinct in the most natural way; *most* of the commercial devices are not.

It is often the unmusical people who exhibit the greatest dislike for the piano-playing machine; and in this connection I am greatly interested to find that it is often the unmusical people who are best able to produce and observe the variations of tone-quality in my experiments. On the other hand, there are a great many complaints freely expressed by users of piano-players as to shortcomings both in the instruments and in the rolls, and I therefore fear that we shall have to wait a long time before scales and five-finger exercises can be abolished. The only remedy for the educational problem appears to me to be to reform the teaching of music in the same way that the teaching of mathematics is being reformed, and not to force piano lessons on children who dislike them. They can always get a machine to play the music if they want when they grow up.

So far as my experience goes, given an instrument constructed on dynamical and physical principles, and music-rolls in which the chords are accurately cut as chords should be (in a rigorously mathematical sense), neither variations in tone-quality nor dynamical differentiation between bass and treble notes of chords in any part of the scale need be so difficult as the manipulation of the speed regulator, which causes the greatest trouble in every piano-playing machine. Under conditions which are possible, an instrument based on the principle of "we play the notes, you do the rest," might prove a leading factor in the musical education of the future. But such a condition seems to be one of unstable equilibrium between two opposing forces. One is the popular tendency to regard all piano-playing machines as *too mechanical*, the other is the tendency of the manufacturers to make them *more and more mechanical*.

G. H. BRYAN.

THE STUDENTS' PAGE.

V.

BEETHOVEN is known to pianists almost exclusively as a writer of pianoforte sonatas. Amongst his pianoforte works, however, is a mass of miscellaneous compositions which are well worthy of attention. It is intended here to direct the player-pianist's attention to some of these.

First for the variations. Beethoven produced twenty-one sets of variations for pianoforte solo, from the "Nine Variations upon a March of Dressler" of his 10th or 11th year (1780) to the "Thirty-three Variations on a Waltz of Diabelli" of his 53rd (1823). The juvenile efforts are merely of sentimental or historical interest. They are of the 18th century unmitigatedly. The mature creations are superb masterpieces, particularly the "Diabelli" (Op. 120), the "Fifteen Variations with Fugue" (Op. 35), and the "Thirty-two Variations" in C minor of 1807. Along with the remaining variations are sets based upon the tunes of "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the King."

The form of the variation is the greatest in the list of musical forms, since it affords opportunity for the most exhaustive treatment of the matter in hand. At its best, the variation is a final test of the composer's genius, as we see from the thoughts of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. At its worst, it is a demonstration of the depths of poverty and thinness to which music can descend. The 18th century was the age of facile variation. Between Bach's "Goldberg" variations and Beethoven's Op. 15 little of value was produced in pianoforte literature. Haydn and Mozart wrote some charming pieces (the first movement of Mozart's "Sonata in A major" is particularly lovely), but neither of these composers emulated the heights of Bach and Beethoven. The lower-grade types of pianoforte music of the post-Beethoven period abounded in vulgar variations on popular operatic airs. (The composition known as "Hexameron" is a curious product of those days, in which a large number of composers provided each a separate variation of the same tune.) Brahms again elevated the form. His half-dozen sets of variations are advanced, but easily understandable with concentrated study. Many composers to-day are providing pianoforte variations, a large example being the final part of Benjamin Dale's "Sonata in D minor." As practised in other arts than music, the idea of the variation can be studied through the first score or so sonnets of Shakespeare.

The "Thirty-two Variations" in C minor is a most exhilarating and inspiring work. The theme is only eight bars long, and the first thirty-one variations retain that same length. The final variation is extended into a big finish. The course of the music is continuous, *i.e.*, the variations "run on," sometimes in pairs, but more often in larger groups. The 12th variation (run into by a virile descending scale) is in major tonality, as are the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th. The student will readily observe the place of the 23rd variation, since the music there assumes a sudden *pianissimo* (*tremolando*). The 30th variation is again suddenly *pianissimo*, but this time of a chordal nature. The 31st variation passes without break into the finale, which is as a normal continuation of its predecessor for its first eight bars, and thence for its remaining 43 a brilliant *résumé* of what has gone before. This work is an ideal holiday-piece.

The "Fifteen Variations with Fugue," Op. 35, is a weightier composition, though not nearly so worthy. It opens with an example of Beethoven's humour, *viz.*, with an "Introduction" erected upon the bass of the theme, and consisting (1) of the bass itself (an introductory chord *plus* thirty-two bars of truncated music), and (2) of a three-fold repetition of the same, (a) *a due*, (b) *a tre*, and (c) *a quattro*. The final passage leads up into the melody, the presentation of which has been well prepared for by this curious introduction. The first four variations are clear (the second contains a cadenza-like flourish). A new departure is made at the 5th. The 7th to 10th are a little intricate, but soon become clear to the player familiar with the original theme. The 13th forms the conclusion to the sequence of movements that commenced with the first variation, Nos. 14 and 15 being a minor interlude and a florid *largo* treatment of the music. (The player is advised to work with an edition which divides the composition between variation 13 and variation 14, since the minor interlude and decorated *largo* are, as it were, introductory to the fugue.)

The fugue finale is only fugue by title. It is in reality a not over-dignified development of the introduction-and-theme of the earliest outset of the piece. The "Fugue" is made up of the original bass. It passes with a flourish into the theme, which in its turn proceeds through various embellishments into the last chord of all.

This work is useful, and gives a good deal of pleasure. To the advanced student, however, it is interesting more as a compendium of early classical pianoforte styles and figures than as anything else.

The huge "Diabelli Variations" are too extensive to be dealt with in the present issue of the *P.P.R.* As to the variations on "God Save the King" and "Rule Britannia," these are very valuable for the insight they give us into the workings of Beethoven's mind. To an Englishman, such tunes are not suitable for variation, since their spiritual and emotional significance is too restricted — their meaning is too concrete — to permit of the unlimited expansion necessary to make the exercising of this form profitable. But to Beethoven, these tunes were more of an abstract nature than a concrete. They contained a certain measure of pronounced and definite meaning, but fundamentally they were mere bits of independent music, to be regarded and dealt with on lines of normally musical procedure. Hence, as we ourselves cannot dissociate them from their everyday significance, and the exceptional value of the works as guides into the nearer surfaces of Beethoven's mind, the variations on "God Save the King" form an example of virile mentality fit to set beside the "Thirty-two Variations" in C minor. Beethoven proves that our straightforward national hymn has a depth and variety of meaning not generally associated with it. There are seven variations in all, the last of them a lengthy finale. The variations on "Rule Britannia" are obviously programmatic. They bring to mind Britain in the days of "wooden-walls," perpetual sea-fights, and (apparently) universal maritime enthusiasms. The music is truly great for its class. The first variation is deep and low, and almost sullen. The second rolls heavily. The third is stormy, and the fourth thunderous. (This is evidently a battle.) The fifth (and last) variation is *à la danse*. The coda is most vivacious; and the work concludes in a manner positively scintillating with life, vigour, animation and passionate energy.

The "Bagatellen" are series of short, pleasant pieces intended to be played *en suite*, i.e., of pieces individually complete, but at the same time linked up in one way or another with their companions. These works are particularly suitable for children.

The "Rondo a Capriccio" in G major (Op. 129) is, on the other hand, one of the grandest examples of the lighter type of classical pianoforte music in existence. It is "symphonic" in every sense, and could have come from no one but Beethoven in his best period. It must be played with energy, passion, and determination, yet with no exaggeration of mood. It must be held well in hand, especially in the lengthy minor sections which (heralded by a huge, swirling series of notes) constitute the part of the rondo which precedes the finale. This work calls for, and repays, exhaustive study.

The "Two Rondos" (Op. 51) are similarly large classical works of a non-pathetical spirit, fit product of the period of the "Waldstein" and "Appassionata" sonatas (Beethoven's grandest creations in sonata-form). The first of these rondos (C major) is the more passionate, the second (G major) pertaining rather to the "grazioso" class of music. The great "Andante in F" is another work of Beethoven's central period. It was, indeed, originally intended for slow movement to the "Waldstein" sonata, being discarded for a number of reasons. The music is a little unusual in spirit, lacking the depth of passion associated with such compositions. The nature of the work is orchestral, and its movement is of the "moto" character.

A "Phantasie" (Op. 77) and a "Polonaise" (Op. 89) are the two remaining pieces of important pianoforte "miscellanea" of Beethoven. The former is an interesting work of unreserved "phantasy." It contains unbarred passages, cadenzas, abrupt changes of time and key, and perpetual variety of movement. It begins in G minor, settles early into B flat major, wandering thence into a pronounced sojourn in B major, in which key—after a transient exploration into C major—it closes. The "Polonaise" is an animated work, of the type pertaining, not to Chopin, but to Weber.

(To be continued.)

THE STUDENTS' PAGE is a department of the "Piano-Player Review" established for the use of serious player-pianists. The main features of player-piano technique will be expounded month by month, and technical and æsthetic difficulties solved for correspondents.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that "serious" player-pianists are not of necessity students of advanced music, and that (in accordance with our "Editorial" in the February issue) we are anxious to stimulate imagination and increase knowledge, even in most rudimentary directions.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. K. (WELLINGTON).—The question of touch raised in “Owner’s” letter is too debatable a one to take up in these columns. See Matthey’s book, “The Act of Touch,” as opposed to “Owner’s” views.

F. W. (CHURCH STRETTON).—We know of no case among our acquaintances where the accenting-device has been added to a piano-player, but it can be done. It will be rather a big job if your instrument is fitted with only one touch-lever. The wind-chest will have to be divided.

STELLA (BIRMINGHAM).—We are unable to advise you what instrument to buy, but suggest that you use your own judgment, which we should imagine to be safe, and choose that player-piano from which the most artistic playing is produced.

CORNOPEAN (LEICESTER).—Get a piano-player by all means. At the moment we cannot give you a list of cornet and piano music, but any music dealer will find out what you want. There must be a great number of songs and instrumental pieces which could be used for cornet and piano.

M. F. R. (LONDON WALL).—Go and hear the recitals given in London by several of the leading player-piano Houses. You will soon be convinced of their utility. Yes, the Pianola was used at a first-class Queen’s Hall Concert with the orchestra, Nikisch conducting. See *P.P.R.*, Vol. I., No. 1.

R. W. J. (MERIONETH).—The instrument you describe is certainly one of the very earliest, and is probably of French manufacture. It is a pity that the name-plate is off. We believe, from the description, that it was made by Tibouville Lamy, of Paris. To-day, however, it is of no value, except as a “curiosity.”

KITTEN (SMALL HEATH).—You must be a very good-natured kitten indeed to put up with so much music from your neighbour. We cannot suggest any valid reason why your neighbour should not use his piano-player as much as he chooses. Why not “Hooray” boldly after each performance? If your neighbour is bashful, it may have the desired effect.

VACUUM (LEEDS).—We are glad that the article on Motors has helped you, but you must be wrong somewhere if you cannot get yours right by following the directions. Our correspondent has seen your letter, and thinks that you have put the slides back upside down; or you may have left one of the wind-trunks off—most probably the former.

CHIBIABOS (BIRMINGHAM).—If your nom de plume is fair, we appreciate your disguisedly simple queries; but we are not so easily drawn. What particular virtue there may be in tallow candles for lubricating piano-players before playing the Beethoven 5th symphony, we do not know.

BANKER (ASTON).—The ordinary width of a grand player-piano is about 5 feet, length 6 feet 6 inches or so.

POET (NEWHALL).—It is sad that your player often offends your æsthetic temperament. Why should it? Poets can idealise even unmentionable things. Either write an ode to “The Wheeze in the Player” or send for the expert repairer.

JOHN A. (HEREFORD).—Try some special rolls actually cut to the playing of a well-known pianist. Then get an ordinary roll of the same work and see how near a reading to the former roll you can get. There is a simple invention on the market which enables you to get the *exact* tempo of a work as played by some authentic exponent, but perhaps you do not own that particular player. Write to the Orchestrelle Co., Bond Street, London.

W. W. P. (MANCHESTER).—The rocking lever is peculiar to one make of player—“The Angelus.” Go to the local agent.

ECONOMIC (LIVERPOOL).—The rolls you are looking for are advertised on the inside cover of this journal.

D. D. (LEICESTER), R. F. (BIRKENHEAD), JUNO (COVENTRY).—Please refer to “How to Accompany,” Vol. I., Nos. 1-2-3, *P.P.R.*

GWEN (SHEPPERTON).—There is no reason why playing should tire you more than it used to do. Leave it alone for a time.

CARAVAN.—We think that the best instrument for your purpose is a small Bord or other pianette, and a separate player to wheel up to it. The combined player-piano will perhaps be too heavy for caravaning.

NELL (ERDINGTON).—Did you ever read the anecdote printed in Vol. I., No. 2, of this journal, of a cook who could make better pastry to the playing of a pianola than without? But your question is answered in three words—“Lock it up.” Maids *will* use these instruments, but, except for sins of omission in household duties, there is very little harm done to you if they do occasionally use the player-piano.

ORGANIST (PERTH).—We do not know of any special organ arrangements which are cut for the player. Write for catalogues of rolls from advertisers in this journal.

ORGANIST (TOOTING).—To cure dumb notes, read “The Care of the Piano-Player,” Vol. I., Nos. 1, 2 and 3.

MUSICUS (UXBRIDGE).—Ditto.

A. A. R. (READING).—Dry the rolls well before a good fire, and you will find that they will resume their normal width.

PATER (RICHMOND).—Let the boy have his way. If he is a born pianist, he will soon leave the player for the keyboard. If he is not, he will get and give greater pleasure through the medium of the player. In any case his knowledge of music will increase more rapidly through the latter process. Don’t worry.

BERTHA (SUTTON).—Write to the chief music-roll firms. Promise to sing in public to the player accompaniment, and we think they will cut all the songs you require. No; we do not remember having seen any accompaniments cut of Marx’s songs, although they are so beautiful.

CHURCHMAN (PLYMOUTH).—The Orchestrelle Co. have cut a few hymn-tunes—chiefly popular A. and M. tunes by Dykes. Write to the makers of your player if your instrument is not of standard note compass.

BEN. A. (LINCOLN).—Your queries are a little ambiguous. The particular term you use for players in general is the name of one particular make of instrument only. It is quite a good one, however, and all you need to do is to see one or two others, and buy the one you prefer. The standard sizes (if you mean compass) are 65-note and 88-note players. Don’t buy an instrument with any other number of notes; the music will be very limited if you do.

CHEERY (OXTED).—Try a weaker spring in the main reservoir (suction bellows); the playing will be more sensitive and require much more care in blowing. The standard instrument is built for the average player-pianist. The more serious student can work with more delicate wind-pressures.

ALICE (BLOOMSBURY).—Your letter leads us to suppose that you wear very high-heeled shoes when playing. Use a pair with low heels, or even bedroom slippers for preference. You will then get a better leverage over the pedals.

SHRIMPTON.—For spools and paper, write to the Orchestrelle Co., Bond Street, London, and The Perforated Music Co., Regent Street, London.

JOHNSON (TORQUAY).—The reference to extraneous blowing we think was in the May number, in a letter from a correspondent. An electric motor, if under perfect control and used for the paper turning *only*, would be an excellent thing, but we know of no electrical device sufficiently under control for the purpose. To drive the whole instrument by electric motor is incompatible with personal control and artistic playing. Yes, most pneumatic players act by suction, and an electric motor could be used to drive the present suction devices, but with the disadvantage mentioned above. An electric player-piano is merely a glorified musical box.

H. H. (DEVONPORT).—We do not draw comparisons between the various players. Write to our advertisers.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor, *The Piano-Player Review*.

SIR,—Your correspondent's extensive criticism of my "Strong and Weak Points" paper calls for some reply.

His first two pages are occupied with a denial that any differences of touch exist, or can exist, in piano-playing of any sort ; there are, and can be, no variations in quality of tone, in contradistinction to varying degrees of quantity ; any supposition to the contrary is an illusion "in the mind of the executant." Therefore, given sufficient command of degrees of simple percussion (like the steam-hammer, which proverbially divides its time between pounding steel-blocks and patting watch-glasses), the pneumatic player can do all that human hands can really do to the keys and hammers and strings of a piano.

The illusion to the contrary is curiously prevalent among musical people (not only the "executants"). They are under the impression that they can and do hear differences in "colour," or quality, between tones of the same degree of loudness, when a fine pianist is playing. Your correspondent may not hear them ; but what reason has he for his opinion that they are impossible ? His argument seems to be that it is all a matter of "the amount of force transmitted to the swing of the hammer." Yes ; but the swing of the hammer is not necessarily a simple movement. Modern piano-mechanism is exceedingly responsive ; and any variations in pressure on the keys, between the moment of the first contact of the finger on the key and the moment of the impact of the hammer on the string, have their effect upon the swing of the hammer ; and, beside this, there may be, and are, varying *durations* of contact between hammer and string. Both these delicate effects on the vibration of the strings involve highly complex and difficult mathematical formulation ; but they clearly exist ; and mathematical physicists are at present working upon them (see, for instance, the reference to Dr. Kaufmann's investigations, in the summary of Prof. Bryan's paper, in the June *P.P.R.*). Your correspondent, in denying this fact of musical experience, has given himself away ; his ears have failed to hear these differences, and his mind has overlooked the factors which make them possible. Whether or not these varying touches will be obtained and brought under control in future improvements of the pneumatic player—perhaps by modification of the structure of the strikers, or of the method of applying the suction-force ?—remains to be seen ; but for the present the fact is that, once suction is admitted to the striking pneumatics and the strikers are set in motion more or less vigorously,

the human being has no further control over them. There is, therefore, no means of varying the quality of touch ; and this, as I said, is the most subtle and inevitable difference in musical performance between a pneumatic striker and a pianist's finger.

In my paper, I spoke of the detriment to clear tone (in upright player-pianos) involved by "filling half the piano-case with machinery." Your correspondent gravely informs me that the cubic capacity so occupied is between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{6}$, *not* $\frac{1}{2}$. No doubt he is right ; but when he goes on to deny that the additional mechanism makes any appreciable difference in the tone of the piano, I might be surprised, if he had not just told me that differences of touch, also, have no existence for him. Has he ever listened to an upright piano being played without the front boards ? I do not recommend it for ordinary purposes ; but the shrillness of this effect is no more extreme than the dullness (for ears that hear) involved by the interposition of a layer of pneumatics, strikers, tracker-box, motor, etc., etc., between the front boards and the strings. The tone of a "player-grand" is very little affected, by comparison, as I think I pointed out in my paper.

As to the great 2-slot *v.* 85-slot accent controversy, I can only say that I regard the crispness of pneumatic playing as one of its strongest points ; and this crispness is sacrificed by the 2-slot accent, in the very passages (chords) where one values it most. Some people do not care for crispness ; and some ears are not sensitive to fine differences of time (or of touch ! or of tone !). For them no harm is done ; but the others are not a negligible quantity in music, and it is to them that the 85-slot accent must appeal. I quite appreciate your correspondent's point about the relative independence of the accompaniment with the 2-slot accent ; but he rather overstates it ; the loudness of his accompaniment is not fully independent of variations in pressure—*e.g.*, his pianissimo accompaniment is necessarily louder when the theme-pressure is strong than when it is weak. And he is mistaken in supposing that 85-slot accent machines are burdened with sustaining-pedal pneumatics ; they are never found in these instruments, because their space on the tracker-bar is required for accent-slots. I quite agree that a non-pneumatic motor might be an advantage, for both types of machine.

Finally, he disputes my observation that the effect of a 2-slot accent is passed on, in rapid sequences, to notes not intended to receive an accent. After his confessions about touch, and time, and tone, and his remark that he played "certain works" (tester-rolls ?) "nearly as perfectly on a ten-year-ago player as to-day," I should not expect him to trouble about,

or notice, a few false accents here and there ; but let me ask him a question. As "one who really knows most that there is to know" about these things, will he explain to me why such passages are never, in fact, accented by the publishers of 2-slot accent rolls—or else are accented without any attempt to distinguish individual notes, but in such a way that the accent takes effect, without exception, on *all* the notes in that half of the register (which, of course, equally confirms my point) ? I have examined more than a hundred of the most recent 2-slot accented rolls, and I have not found any attempt to single out individual notes in passages where groups of accented and non-accented notes (*i.e.*, groups containing some notes *that* ought to be accented and others that ought *not*) follow one another at intervals of $\frac{1}{4}$ — $\frac{1}{2}$ inch on the music-roll. If your correspondent knows of any instances to the contrary, will he tell me one ? And if he cannot, will he admit that his contradiction of my statement was based on prejudice and guess-work, and nothing more ? (My observation was the result of many careful experiments, in which I tried to accent single notes for myself, in these "normal," or else indiscriminately accented, passages. I came to the conclusion that the reason why the publishers do not attempt to accent single notes in these passages is that the thing cannot be done satisfactorily, with the 2-slot accent-device.)

There are several points about the secondary valves of 2-slot accent machines (nothing to do with their accent-device, and not mentioned by your correspondent) which I should like to see incorporated in the other type of machine ; it is a pity that patents and commercial competition prevent this at present. But it is blind, or rather deaf, prejudice to assert that the advantage of the 85-slot type, *as an accent-device*, is "more theoretical than actual." There is all the difference between a principle applied in the form of an audible makeshift, and the same principle worked out in a nearly perfect development.

Your correspondent's unswerving devotion to the Pneumatic Instrument in all its acts and passions (except when it has 85 accent-slots) has my sincere respect. If he will believe me, my heart contains an equal enthusiasm for my piano-machine, with all its accents and limitations. Life would be distinctly less livable without it ; and perhaps I shall live long enough to hear a pneumatic player which may really overcome the present imperfections so stoutly denied by your correspondent. But, meanwhile, enthusiasm is none the worse for being critical, nor a musical critic for having good ears ; and I must leave it to your readers whether or not, on the points in dispute between us, "this gentleman doth protest too much."

Yours very truly,

J. H. MORRISON.

PENTIREGLAZE, ST. MINVER, July 10.

To the Editor, *The Piano-Player Review*.

SIR,—You were good enough to quote an article of mine from the "Musical Standard" on the shortcomings of the piano-player.

May I say first, though as a personal matter it is of no importance, that I am not an opponent of the piano-player. I have none, but I would very much like to have one, especially as a means of exploring difficult music, and I would like to use it in conjunction with the print of the music, but only for my own use, not to play to other people. This would give me immense pleasure. My article was intended to point out that many of the claims for the mechanical player are unfounded, and that it does no good to make incorrect statements.

As to phrasing on the organ, it is quite likely I have been loose in language somewhere, and have defined phrasing as dependent on the relative accent of individual notes in one place, and then spoken of the organ as phrasing by clipping. Clipping on the organ gives an effect which is a poor substitute for accent, but whether I have called it "phrasing" or not is really only definition ; it is only a substitute. But this substitute is not available on the piano, because, though an automatic machine could let the dampers fall at any instant desired, the evanescence of a piano note makes clipping on the piano almost entirely ineffectual.

On pages 76 and 77 there is a paragraph to the effect that, however mechanical the machine is, if the result is musical, the musician is necessary somewhere ; and the more perfect the machine, the more necessary the musician ; he comes in further back then, in making the record instead of in controlling the machine. There is an editorial note to say this is not clear. I agree ; may I amplify it ? If you had a perfect machine that played every note at exactly the time with exactly the force that, say, Liszt employed, or, better still, with exactly the effect intended by the composer, the punching of the paper would need a highly trained musician, and the machine might be worked by anybody. He would merely supply the necessary energy, and his place might be just as well taken by an electric or water motor. The question is whether such a machine would be of any value. At first one would say Yes ; but I would suggest that as far as the player goes, much of the pleasure arises from his being, to some extent, the performer, and the pleasure of performance is very keen. But there is another question, and that is whether such a perfect machine would give any pleasure to the hearer. There are some machines driven by electric motors, which

play with various notes accented, and slight variations of time to give the effect of the human player. There is something absurd about the performance of these mechanisms, and if you hear the same thing played twice with exactly the same accents, and exactly the same little variations in time, it is irritating.

Apart from their other faults, this is noticeable on the phonograph or gramophone.

For these reasons I would suggest that you do not want a piano-player to do too much itself ; you want it to do all the execution, or purely mechanical part of playing, while it is controlled from the musician's point of view, as completely as possible by the performer, much as an ideal orchestra would be controlled by an ideal conductor.

To give exactly the same result as a good pianist, means that each note must be controlled independently as to its energy, or loudness. This obviously cannot be managed with one line of holes per note, but it could with two ; but that needs too wide a roll and a double width tracker-bar. But if repetition can be regarded as not of the first importance, it might be possible to get the result with a single row of holes for each note, using two holes for each. The first hole would not act to move the hammer, it would merely start a mechanism, which would move at a definite speed, its position determining the loudness of the note ; the second hole would sound the note, and its loudness would thus depend on the distance between the first and second hole. This notion would need a good deal of working out, but it did not seem worth while for me to go on with it, as such a player would cut out the performer altogether, and would, I fear, be of no value for that reason.

Though I have been put down as an opponent of the piano-player, may I point out that though its advocates are apt to claim merits for it that do not exist, they sometimes forget to give it all that is due ? It is generally forgotten that the left hand cannot generally play what is set down for it in piano music. Anyone will see what is meant at once if he will try piano music on the manuals of an organ, or on the harmonium. The piano-player, however, can play what is written, and do it accurately.

There is an idea that the piano-player falls behind the pianist in the matter of tone quality. It is supposed that a pianist has control over the tone of his instrument, independently of the loudness.

In the piano, the hammer just before it strikes the string is swinging round on the centre at the end of the shank, and it is quite clear of the mechanism that formerly connected it with the key. It has a certain velocity on which the loudness depends, and there is no independent variable to give any difference of tone independently of the loudness. Thus, just before each note sounds the hammer is swinging round with a certain velocity, and that velocity determines the loudness of the note and the corresponding tone. It does not in the least matter how the velocity was acquired. The key may have been pressed slightly during the first part of its fall, and hard towards the end, or the reverse, or it may have been hit with a poker ; as long as the same velocity is given to the hammer, the loudness and tone quality are the same. Any different velocity gives a different loudness and its corresponding tone quality ; but there is no way of separating the loudness and the tone quality so as to vary them independently.

Tone, of course, varies with the loudness ; but the tone for each loudness depends on the maker of the instrument, and not on the player at all. It is again merely a question of imagination, and a piano-player is not in any way behind a pianist as far as tone quality is concerned.

J. SWINBURNE.

OXTED, *July 3rd, 1913.*

To the Editor, *The Piano-Player Review.*

COED Y BLAIDDAU,
TAN Y BWLCH,
FESTINIOG,
N. WALES.

DEAR SIR,—I promised to give Mr. Evans and to your readers in general the result of my experiences with reference to strong *versus* weak springs in the main suction chamber.

At odd times I have been able to make several hasty experiments.

On the whole I agree with Mr. Evans that the weak spring makes for greater delicacy of touch, but I believe a much more satisfactory refining process is to use a smaller reservoir.

I am having one specially made, of a size to correspond with the total area of the striking pneumatics ; and when I return from my holiday, I hope to work through the experimental stages to a finish.

The weight of spring seems to me not of so great importance as the size of the feeders and reservoirs.

One who is probably the greatest authority in America on pneumatics as applied to players explained to me that players of the most sensitive delicate construction possible, if put on the market, would go far to kill the industry ; for two reasons, viz. : (1) That the ordinary person would find them extremely difficult to use with any satisfaction to himself and his friends ; (2) That the musician player-pianist would play so perfectly that the ordinary person would give up any attempt to play at all by this means.

E.

To the Editor, *The Piano-Player Review*.

SIR,—One wonders if Mr. Ernest Newman was himself a victim of the “Predisposers” and “Suggestors” when he arrived at the conclusion that the pianist at the concert he quotes was not succeeding in playing the Bach piece “a quarter as well as the piano-player could do.”

One cannot help the feeling that he has a predisposition to overestimate the qualities of the “Player” performance of the D minor Toccata and Fugue ; and since the idea of “Suggestion” has been put forward by himself, one cannot overlook the fact that he may be the victim of auto-suggestion on this point. It may quite easily be that in his playing of the work he imagines he is getting effects which are not apparent to other people. Once under the influence of such an illusion, it would be natural that any mere concert performance of the work would fall into a lower category, and be written off from that point of view.

I find it difficult to convince myself that the pneumatic player can, as a matter of fact, play this piece *better* than the human pianist. I can easily believe that a better arrangement could be cut, taking advantage of the extended technique of the instrument, but I cannot see where the “machine” is going to beat the first-class human pianist. Will Mr. Newman expound unto us ?

I remember seeing in a previous number of the *P.P.R.* some Editorial comments on the superiority of the machine-made “shake” over the human variety. It is curious that I have always considered the “shake”

to be one of the weak spots of the "Player." In my own instrument the poor tone, the wooliness and lack of resiliency of the "shake" are sources of perpetual annoyance to me. It may be that I am unfortunate in my instrument. Granted—but then I have never yet been entirely satisfied with the "shake" on any instrument, and I have heard and I have tried most of the best "Players."

Can it be, Sir, that the "Predisposers" and "Suggestors" have been at work on this point?

Yours truly,
"PERPLEXED."

MUSIC NOTES AND NEWS.

Messrs. John Broadwood & Sons, Ltd., have sent us a specimen of a loose-leaf index for music-roll announcements, which permits of the extra sheets being fitted in month by month, thus making a compact volume. The idea is an excellent one. It obviates all risk of any sheet being mislaid, and preserves the whole of the lists in the easiest possible form for reference.

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